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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 TEGUCIGALPA 000949

SIPDIS

STATE FOR WHA/CEN

E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/22/2019

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [CASC](#) [MARR](#) [KDEM](#) [PHUM](#) [ASEC](#) [HO](#)

SUBJECT: TFH01: HONDURAS COUP SITREP #56 09/22/2009 AS OF
11:00 LOCAL (13:00 EDT)

REF: TEGUCIGALPA 945 AND OTHERS

Classified By: Ambassador Hugo Llorens, reasons 1.4 (b and d)

¶1. (U) Security forces removed protesters from the Brazilian Embassy in the early morning hours, employing tear gas, according to Brazilian Embassy sources. Estimates on the number of protestors removed range from 500 to 1,000, depending on the source. According to a televised police announcement, the police are holding some of the protestors at two local baseball stadiums for "processing." Anti-coup member of Congress Marvin Ponce (UD) claimed in a televised broadcast that the detainees were being tortured, which the police have denied.

¶2. (SBU) As of 0800 local (1000 EDT) streets were quiet in Tegucigalpa due to the curfew, though some vehicles and pedestrians could be seen, and Emboffs were able to reach the Embassy without encountering police or any other obstructions. At approximately 1000 local (1200 EDT), the de facto regime issued a recorded announcement on all networks stating that any civil unrest that takes place will be the fault of Zelaya, and the security forces stand ready to keep the peace.

¶3. (C) The Ambassador spoke again at 0745 local (0945 EDT) with First Lady Xiomara Castro de Zelaya, who remains with President Zelaya at the Brazilian Embassy. She stated the security forces brought in light armored vehicles overnight, and used bullets in addition to tear gas to forcibly remove the crowds outside, and some people were injured. She added that security forces now occupy all the private residences adjoining the Brazilian Embassy. Electricity and water were turned back on for the Brazilian Embassy at noon local. The First Lady noted there were approximately 70 people in the Embassy compound, including some protestors who managed to get in during the clash with police. In a subsequent phone conversation with the Ambassador, President Zelaya stated 300 supporters were present, they were out of food and water, and Zelaya had advised his supporters to leave when able. Zelaya asked the Ambassador for USG assistance in finding a way for his supporters to receive supplies or gain safe passage out of the compound.

¶4. (C) The Ambassador met with Armed Forces (HOAF) Chief MG Vasquez Velasquez at 1100 local (1300 EDT). The Ambassador made clear our interest in ensuring that all efforts were

made to avoid violence. He urged that the military continue to support the San Jose Accord and encourage Micheletti to permit an International Commission to come to Honduras and help mediate the situation. The Ambassador warned that the Honduran security forces should avoid entering the diplomatic compound of the republic of Brazil and stressed that any action in this regard would be viewed in the gravest terms by the U.S. and the international community. Vasquez said he was doing everything in his power to avoid deaths. He said that Zelaya continued to make inflammatory statements regarding his commitment to convene a constituent assembly. Zelaya was also urging supporters to rebel against the regime. He noted that the Honduran military had information that Zelaya supporters were making large numbers of molotov cocktails to use in street confrontation with security forces. Vasquez agreed with the Ambassador that Honduras could no longer contain the situation and needed international help. He suggested that the Foreign Minister of Peru, Panama, Colombia and Canada, as well as representatives from the U.S. be allowed to come to Tegucigalpa and engage in a diplomatic initiative and raised Zelaya's concerns in the meeting. Vasquez said that the Honduran military had no intentions of entering the Brazilian chancery and violating the Geneva convention. (note: We have received information from several sources that the Honduran Supreme court may be in the process of giving the order to enter the compound and arrest Zelaya.) Vasquez agreed to allow protesters and Brazilian embassy employees to leave the embassy without hindrance and to supply food and water. (The Brazilian Charge reported at 12:30 local that a truck with food had just pulled up to his embassy).

TEGUCIGALP 00000949 002 OF 003

15. (C) The Ambassador spoke on two other occasions with President Zelaya during the morning. The Ambassador spoke to Zelaya at 11:00 local time. Zelaya said his situation was somewhat difficult. At that point they still had no water and he expressed concern about having such a large number of his supporters in the Chancery with him. He said he had encouraged them to leave the compound but that they were concerned that they would be arrested. He also said that the people in the chancery needed food and water. The Ambassador said he would work on both of his requests. Following the meeting with General Vasquez the Ambassador spoke to Zelaya and informed him that the security forces would allow his supporters to leave the Chancery without facing any reprisals, The Ambassador also informed him that he had received authorization to get food and drink to those inside the compound. Zelaya appreciated the U.S. support.

16. (C) During the earlier conversation with Zelaya he told the Ambassador that he maintained some contact with Micheletti commission member Arturo Corrales. He said that Corrales had asked him to appoint two of his advisors to meet with him. He said he had agreed and that a meeting was scheduled to take place sometime this afternoon. He said that for him everything was negotiable except his return as President of Honduras. He said this was a principle for both himself and the international community. He stressed that the San Jose Accord as currently drafted was based on input from regime officials. He said he had agreed to each and all conditions. He noted that he continued to be flexible to further modifications of the Accord, assuming the regime was serious about concluding a deal. Zelaya said it was important for the international community to continue to put pressure on the regime. He said he looked forward to President Obama's speech tomorrow and agreed to stay in touch with the Ambassador.

17. (C) Police contacts told Embassy employee that security forces began removing approximately 500 to 1,000 protestors from the vicinity of the Brazilian Embassy at 0500 local (0700 EDT), deploying water cannons and tear gas, but denied use of rubber bullets. The police source stated that five police officers sustained minor injuries from thrown rocks,

and that no protestors were injured. The source noted the police are seeking to remain flexible in allowing people caught in the last-minute curfew on September 21 to return to their homes, acknowledging many were caught off guard by the sudden declaration.

¶18. (U) One television news reporter stated many people who run market stalls in Comayaguela (adjacent to Tegucigalpa) slept in their stalls overnight because of the suddenness of the curfew announcement.

¶19. (SBU) At 1100 local (1300 EDT), Pro-Zelaya Radio Globo was reporting live from an anti-coup protest/roadblock "outside the U.S. Ambassador's residence." RSO confirms the protestors are burning tires in the road approximately 100 meters north of the residence, but there location near the residence was a coincidence. The police stated that they had the protest under control.

Infrastructure and Communications

¶10. (U) Pro-Zelaya television channel 36 is again off the air, but Radio Globo (same owner) and pro-Zelaya broadcaster Eduardo Maldonado's daily call-in news program were broadcasting, and critical of de facto authorities today. All other channels appear to be operating normally.

¶11. (SBU) Toncontin International Airport in Tegucigalpa (TGU), San Pedro Sula and all other international airports were ordered closed by the de facto authorities on September ¶21.

¶12. (U) According to police and HOAF sources, Honduras' land borders are closed in accordance with the curfew.

TEGUCIGALP 00000949 003 OF 003

¶13. (U) There are no reports of abnormal public utility outages in the country.

Consular and Embassy Operations

¶14. (U) The Embassy is closed today, September 22, due to the all-day curfew, with only essential personnel present. All other personnel have been instructed to abide by the curfew.

¶15. (SBU) All Mission employees and dependents have been instructed to remain in their homes. No non-essential travel, either personal or official is authorized until further notice. All TDY travel into Honduras has been suspended for the remainder of the week.

¶16. (U) Post issued a revised Warden Message late evening September 21. The Consular Section continues to regularly update ACS information on the Embassy website. The Consular Section has been in regular contact with a group of 34 Amcit students who are at the Marriot Hotel, awaiting an opportunity to depart. They had been scheduled to depart by air September 21, but could not due to the airport closure.

¶17. (SBU) An EAC meeting is scheduled for 1300 local (1500 EDT).
LLORENS